

1 What is claimed is:

2 1. A system of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced
3 price, the system comprising:

4 A. a marketplace accessible on line and comprising a controlling
5 entity and a merchandise collection,

6 B. a distribution format structured to award preselected
7 merchandise to at least one of a restricted number of
8 customers,

9 C. a bid pool comprising a predetermined number of bids, each bid
10 available for purchase and representative of an opportunity
11 for award of the preselected merchandise,

12 D. each bid comprising a monetary value equal to a predetermined
13 share of the purchase price of the preselected merchandise,
14 and

15 E. said distribution format further structured to award the
16 preselected merchandise at a reduced price to a selected one
17 of the restricted number of customers and to a customer having
18 purchased a sufficient number of bids to at least
19 substantially equal the purchase price of the preselected
20 merchandise.

21 2. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said distribution
22 format comprises a raffle application, said raffle application
23 participated in by the restricted number of customers.

24 3. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein the selected one of the
25 restricted number of customers is determined by a random

1 selection.

2 4. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said merchandise
3 collection comprises a displayed array of merchandise
4 accessible on line.

5 5. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said bid pool is
6 structured for on-line access to and purchase of said
7 predetermined number of bids.

8 6. A system as recited in claim 5 wherein instigation of the
9 distribution format is responsive to exhaustion of said bid
10 pool through purchase of all said predetermined number of
11 bids.

12 7. A system as recited in claim 6 wherein each of said restricted
13 number of customers is defined by a purchase of at least one
14 of said plurality of bids.

15 8. A system as recited in claim 7 wherein any one of said
16 restricted number of customers may purchase one or more bids
17 until said bid pool is exhausted.

18 9. A system as recited in claim 5 wherein on-line access to said
19 bid pool comprises a visual display of purchased and un-
20 purchased bids.

21 10. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein a collective monetary
22 amount of all the predetermined number of bids in the bid pool
23 is equal to the purchase price of the preselected merchandise.

24 11. A system as recited in claim 10 wherein the predetermined
25 number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially

1 determined by an estimated bid price.

2 12. A system as recited in claim 11 wherein the predetermined
3 number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially
4 determined by an estimated time period required to exhaust the
5 bid pool through purchase.

6 13. A system as recited in claim 10 wherein the predetermined
7 number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially
8 determined by an estimated time period required to exhaust the
9 bid pool through purchase.

10 14. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said bid pool further
11 includes an automatic bid format.

12 15. A system as recited in claim 14 wherein said automatic bid
13 format comprises a repetitive automatic purchase of at least
14 one bid from each of a plurality of different bid pools.

15 16. A system as recited in claim 15 wherein each of said plurality
16 of different bid pools is associated with the award of
17 substantially equivalent preselected merchandise.

18 17. A system as recited in claim 1 further including a
19 compensation application comprising compensation paid to the
20 controlling entity by customers awarded the preselected
21 merchandise.

22 18. A system as recited in claim 17 wherein said compensation
23 application comprises a commission fee at least partially
24 defined by a predetermined percentage of a customer's savings
25 on the awarded preselected merchandise.

- 1 19. A system as recited in claim 18 wherein the customer's savings
- 2 is at least partially determined by a monetary difference
- 3 between the purchase price of the awarded merchandise and the
- 4 monetary value of the total number of bids purchased by the
- 5 selected one customer on the awarded merchandise.
- 6 20. A system as recited in claim 19 wherein said reduced price is
- 7 at least partially defined as the monetary value of the total
- 8 number of bids purchased by the selected one customer for
- 9 award of the preselected merchandise in addition to the
- 10 commission fee.
- 11 21. A system as recited in claim 20 wherein the commission fee is
- 12 inversely proportional to the monetary value of the total
- 13 number of bids purchased for the preselected merchandise by
- 14 the selected one customer.
- 15 22. A method of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced
- 16 price, said method comprising:
 - 17 displaying a merchandise collection by on-line access,
 - 18 establishing at least one bid pool comprising a
 - 19 predetermined number of bids each being representative of an
 - 20 opportunity to be awarded preselected merchandise,
 - 21 presenting the predetermined number of bids for on-line
 - 22 purchase,
 - 23 structuring each of the bids to represent a predetermined
 - 24 share of the purchase price of the preselected merchandise,
 - 25 awarding the preselected merchandise at a reduced price

1 to at least one customer of a restricted number of customers having
2 purchased at least one bid, and

3 awarding the preselected merchandise to any customer
4 having purchased a sufficient number of bids to at least
5 substantially equal the purchase price of the preselected
6 merchandise.

7 23. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising selecting the one
8 customer of the restricted number of customers by random
9 selection.

10 24. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising structuring each of
11 the predetermined number of bids to represent an equal
12 opportunity to be awarded the preselected merchandise.

13 25. A method as recited in claim 24 comprising allowing each of
14 the plurality of customers to purchase one or more bids until
15 the bid pool is exhausted.

16 26. A method as recited in claim 25 comprising requiring the pre-
17 determined number of customers to purchase at least one bid.

18 27. A method as recited in claim 25 comprising requiring the
19 restricted number of customers to be at least two in number.

20 28. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising activating at least
21 a portion of the distribution format subsequent to exhaustion
22 of the bid pool.

23 29. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising structuring the
24 value of each of the plurality of bids of a common bid pool to
25 be equal.

- 1 30. A method as recited in claim 29 comprising structuring the
- 2 collective value of the plurality of bids of a common bid pool
- 3 to be equal to the purchase price of the preselected
- 4 merchandise.
- 5 31. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising determining the
- 6 number of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an
- 7 estimated bid price.
- 8 32. A method as recited in claim 31 comprising further determining
- 9 the number of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an
- 10 estimated time period needed to exhaust the bid pool.
- 11 33. A method as recited in claim 22 further determining the number
- 12 of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an estimated
- 13 time period needed to exhaust the bid pool.
- 14 34. A method as recited in claim 22 further comprising providing
- 15 for the repetitive, automatic purchase by any customer of at
- 16 least one bid from each of a plurality of different bid pools
- 17 associated with the preselected merchandise.
- 18 35. A method as recited in claim 34 comprising associating each of
- 19 the plurality of different bid pools with substantially
- 20 equivalent preselected merchandise.
- 21 36. A method as recited in claim 22 requiring the payment of a
- 22 commission fee by the at least one customer awarded the
- 23 preselected merchandise at the reduced price.
- 24 37. A process as recited in claim 36 comprising defining the
- 25 commission fee as a predetermined percentage of the monetary

1 difference between the purchase price of the awarded
2 merchandise and the monetary value of the total number of bids
3 purchased by the at least one customer on the awarded
4 merchandise.

5 38. A method as recited in claim 37 comprising defining the
6 reduced price as the monetary value of the total number of
7 bids purchased by the at least one customer for the awarded
8 merchandise plus the commission fee.

9 39. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising defining the
10 reduced price as at least the monetary value of the total
11 number of bids purchased by the at least one customer for the
12 awarded merchandise.

13 40. A method as recited in claim 39 comprising further defining
14 the reduced price as at least the monetary value of the total
15 number of bids purchased by the at least one customer for the
16 awarded merchandise plus a commission fee.

17 41. A system of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced
18 price, said system comprising:

19 a marketplace accessible on line and comprising a
20 merchandise collection,

21 a distribution format structured to award preselected
22 merchandise of the merchandise collection to at least one of a
23 plurality of customers,

24 a bid pool comprising a plurality of bids, each of said
25 plurality of bids available for on-line purchase and representing

an equal opportunity for award of the preselected merchandise, and
said distribution format further structured to award the
preselected merchandise at a reduced price to one of the plurality
of customers having purchased a winning bid.

42. A system as recited in claim 41 wherein said distribution format further comprises an award of the preselected merchandise to any customer having purchased a plurality of bids with a collective monetary value at least substantially equal to a purchase price of the preselected merchandise.

43. A system as recited in claim 41 wherein the reduced price of the awarded preselected merchandise is at least partially defined by the monetary value of the total number of bids purchased by the one customer for the preselected merchandise.

44. A system as recited in claim 43 wherein the reduced price is further defined by the additional payment of a commission fee.

45. A system as recited in claim 44 wherein the commission fee is defined as a pre-determined percentage of the monetary difference between the purchase price of the awarded merchandise and the monetary value of the total number of bids purchased by the at least one customer on the awarded merchandise.

46. A system of on-line merchandising comprising:
a marketplace accessible on-line and comprising a collection
of preselected merchandise,
said preselected merchandise including an electronic gift

1 card,

2 a distribution format structured to award preselected
3 merchandise including said electronic gift card to at least one of
4 a plurality of customers,

5 a bid pool comprising a plurality of bids each available for
6 on-line purchase and representing an opportunity for award of said
7 preselected merchandise, and

8 said distribution format further structured to award at least
9 said electronic gift card at a reduced price to one of the
10 plurality of customers having purchased a winning bid.

11 47. A system as recited in claim 46 wherein said electronic gift
12 card is structured to represent any one of a plurality of
13 predetermined monetary values.

14 48. A system as recited in claim 47 wherein said electronic gift
15 card is structured to be commercially transacted with any of
16 a plurality of vendors.

17 49. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said commercial
18 transaction comprises an exchange of said electronic gift card
19 for merchandise of commensurate monetary value of any of the
20 plurality of vendors.

21 50. A system as recited in claim 49 wherein said commercial
22 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

23 51. A system as recited in claim 49 wherein said commercial
24 transaction comprises a walk-in transaction.

25 52. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said commercial

1 transaction comprises an exchange of said electronic gift card
2 for a vendor's gift certificate of any of the plurality of
3 vendors.

4 53. A system as recited in claim 52 wherein said commercial
5 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

6 54. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said electronic gift
7 card is structured for delivery to a recipient, said
8 commercial transaction being conducted between the recipient
9 and any of the plurality of vendors.

10 55. A system as recited in claim 54 wherein said commercial
11 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

12 56. A system as recited in claim 54 wherein said commercial
13 transaction comprises a walk-in transaction.